

12 Pro-Life Responses to Abortion Myths

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By Eleanor Bartow

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Will the Supreme Court overturn its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling later this year?

The *Roe* ruling highlighted the greatest logical flaw in support for abortion: For abortion to be illegal at some point before birth (and even most pro-choice Americans agree it should be illegal in the very late stages), you have to pick that point in time. But when?

With *Roe*, the Supreme Court first took a trimester approach to when abortion should be permitted. As the *Roe* opinion was drafted, the justices disagreed on the stage at which abortion should be regulated, even changing that point from the end of the first trimester to the end of the second.

In its final form, *Roe* forbade virtually all abortion regulation in the first trimester, allowed regulation only if serving the mother’s health in the second, and banned prohibition in the third trimester when a mother’s “health” was a consideration. The latter was broadly defined in the companion case *Doe v. Bolton* to include “emotional, psychological” and family health, thus effectively allowing all abortions.

The justice who wrote the majority opinion in *Roe*, Harry Blackmun, even wrote in a memo to his colleagues that *Roe*’s use of trimesters was “arbitrary . . . but perhaps any other selected point, such as quickening or viability (of the fetus), is equally arbitrary.” In *Roe*, the court did not resolve the question of when life begins but ruled that a fetus did not qualify as a “person” as used in the Constitution.

Later, the Supreme Court abandoned the arbitrary trimester framework in favor of another “arbitrary” and “selected point” Blackmun had identified in that memo. In its 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* ruling, the court barred “undue burdens” on abortion before fetal viability.

But drawing the line at the point of viability is also problematic—that point will continue to get earlier in the pregnancy as medical advances create better means of keeping the unborn alive outside the womb; indeed, viability is now weeks earlier than it was when *Roe* was decided. Yet the unborn child did not become a person because it could survive due to modern science.

Newborns are not technically viable either, as they cannot survive on their own. By this logic, we should consider it acceptable to kill newborns.

As the issue comes to the forefront of national debate yet again with the court hearing oral arguments on Dec. 1 in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, here are the many reasons the arguments in favor of abortion are wrong.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** The government should stay out of people's private lives. This is a woman's choice, not anyone else's, and a women's-rights issue.

Why It's Wrong: Laws often restrict an individual's rights, including the right to hurt another person or infringe upon another's rights. In taking the life of an unborn child, a woman is taking away the most basic of all rights.

An unborn child is not part of a woman's body, but a separate, individual human being with its own rights. It is not the mother's property, just as parents are legal guardians of children but not the children's owners and are not allowed to abuse their children.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** When most abortions take place, in early pregnancy, a fertilized egg is just a mass of cells, not a human being. It doesn't feel pain.

Why It's Wrong: A new life begins at conception and should not be destroyed by human interference.

First, one-third of abortions take place after nine weeks of pregnancy. From the moment of conception, the zygote has its own unique DNA structure, is alive and growing and is equipped to become a mature human being.

Six weeks after conception, the unborn child's heartbeat is detectable—but began beating before then. At week three, neural development begins. At week four, the eye, ear and respiratory systems begin to form. At week six, the mouth and lips are present. At week seven, the embryo looks like a baby.

The beginning of life could be defined by many different points of development—fertilization (the fusion of the nuclei of the sperm and egg cell), implantation, the first movement, heartbeat or brain waves, consciousness, or birth. Any point you choose could be just a day's difference between life and death for an unborn child. Nor does the absence of pain at early stages make it moral to kill the unborn child, just as it would not with an adult.

Abortion can involve sucking a baby out of the uterus (or as Planned Parenthood puts it, "the suction machine is turned on and the uterus is gently emptied"), causing a stillbirth by injecting a salt solution into the uterus, and other horrors.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** Abortion can't be a crime against nature if fertilized eggs are spontaneously miscarried in nature.

Why It's Wrong: The occurrence of an event in nature does not justify deliberately mimicking that event. The elderly die of natural causes, but that doesn't make it right to kill them. And many miscarriages are associated with extra or missing chromosomes.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** Birth control isn't 100 percent effective. When it fails, women have been responsible and need abortion as another method to avoid having a child.

Why It's Wrong: Seven percent of women report having unprotected sex in the past three months, not including 8 percent who have unprotected sex but are seeking pregnancy or already pregnant. Many people who use birth control do not do so effectively. The pregnancy-prevention rate of birth-control pills used consistently and correctly is 99 percent. For that small portion who correctly used birth control but it did not work, they have to accept the risks of sexual activity, which include a child. Contraception is free with most health insurance plans and easily available.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** In the case of rape or incest, when a woman was an innocent victim of an involuntary act, she should not be forced to carry a child. She would be forced to suffer even more.

Why It's Wrong: One percent of women say they want an abortion because they were raped, and less than 0.5 percent say they are pregnant as a result of incest. Even in such very rare cases, an unborn child should not be killed for another person's evil deed. The pregnant woman needs love and support, not more trauma.

An estimated 800,000 abortions take place in the United States each year. Common reasons given for seeking an abortion are that a child would disrupt the mother's education (38 percent), interfere with job or career (38 percent) or be unaffordable (73 percent). About half of respondents said they didn't want to be a single mom or were having relationship problems.

About a third said they didn't want any more kids; 25 percent said they didn't want people to know they had sex or got pregnant; 32 percent said they weren't ready for a child; and 22 percent didn't feel mature enough to raise children. More than half of those seeking abortion have had at least one previous birth.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** Minors are too young for the responsibilities of parenthood.

Why It's Wrong: About 3 percent of females who get abortions are younger than 18, and 8 percent are 18 to 19 years old. Parents of minors should teach their children about the consequences of sex, the benefits of abstinence and the limitations of contraception, among other things: Sex can lead to pregnancy, and if it does the unborn child should not be killed. Accepting truths that you don't like is part of maturity and sex should be reserved for mature people ready to care for a child.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** If abortion were made legal only in cases of rape or incest, women would lie.

Why It's Wrong: The court system could settle the truth of their claims and more reporting of rape and incest would help bring perpetrators to justice.

■ **Pro-Abortion Claim:** Abortion is safer than continuing a pregnancy to term.

Why It's Wrong: Even if abortion is safer than pregnancy, that doesn't make it right. But, with modern medicine, the death risks for both abortion and pregnancy are low.

■ Pro-Abortion Claim: It would be better for abnormal fetuses to be aborted than live with poor health or a disability.

Why It's Wrong: In the case of the small minority of fetuses with a potentially life-threatening abnormality, a natural death may result, but, if not, the child should be given the benefit of the doubt, not be killed. It's wrong to kill disabled people for their disabilities.

■ Pro-Abortion Claim: If abortion were outlawed, women would just get riskier, dangerous abortions.

Why It's Wrong: People break other laws with repercussions too, but we don't avoid that outcome by not making those laws. Plus, outlawing abortion would save millions of unborn babies' lives.

It is difficult to know the number of abortions resulting in death before abortion was legalized, because many illegal abortions went unreported. Education is the best alternative, so that women know the risks of trying to get an abortion illegally, how to effectively use birth control and how they can receive assistance as mothers.

■ Pro-Abortion Claim: The right to an abortion has led to a more prosperous society as women have continued in their careers and low-income couples have not been burdened with an additional expense. Abortion has reduced the child abuse and crime that arise from unwanted children.

Why It's Wrong: Abortion has been bad for our society, as it devalues human life and the fulfillment that only family and children, not a job, can provide. If women want to put careers first or can't afford children, they should practice abstinence or correctly use birth control and accept the consequences if those fail.

If women are poor and do have children, the government provides assistance. Adoption is also a better option than killing an unborn child. Many loving, screened, financially stable parents are waiting to adopt babies.

As for whether studies prove that abortion has reduced crime or abuse, this is a dangerous line of argument. Should we abort babies of certain groups more likely to be criminals?

■ Pro-Abortion Claim: A woman has a right to privacy, as recognized by the Supreme Court, and to make her own decisions about her life and happiness.

Why It's Wrong: *Roe v. Wade* continues to be so strongly resisted because it was deeply legally flawed.

In the majority opinion in *Roe*, Justice Blackmun acknowledged that "the Constitution does not explicitly mention any right of privacy," and thus abortion, but that a number of prior court decisions have found "a guarantee of

certain areas or zones of privacy” grounded in the First, Fifth, and particularly the Ninth and 14th Amendments.

The latter reads, “No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” The Ninth Amendment states, “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

The legal arguments are lengthy, but the short version is that the constitutional right to liberty simply does not grant the right to kill another person, and an unborn child is a person. The Constitution does not explicitly guarantee a right to privacy or, by extension, abortion. The Supreme Court has been gravely wrong before (such as with racist rulings in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* and *Plessy v. Ferguson*).

Abortion is a deeply divisive issue, and about half of Americans consider themselves pro-life and half call themselves pro-choice. Overturning *Roe* would not end abortion rights but return the issue to the states, allowing for a more democratic process.